

<p>Prof. S.A. Smith</p> <p>Office Hours: M 2-4 or by individual appointment</p>	<p>LIT 4930</p> <p>1SS2</p> <p>(#23179)</p>	<div data-bbox="743 193 1182 726" data-label="Image"> </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Breaking Boundaries: A SF Creative Writing Workshop</p> <p style="text-align: center;">100% online on Zoom</p>	<p>W 6-8</p> <p>(12:50-3:50)</p>
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“We especially need imagination in science. It is not all mathematics, nor all logic, but it is somewhat beauty and poetry,” the great America astronomer Maria Mitchell wrote in her diary in 1871.

From that inaugural work of body-modification, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, fictions that engage deeply with science have often sought to extend, explore, confuse, or break the confines of the human body and/or soul, to understand more fully what it means to be human. Whether contemplating technological interventions, such as the inventions we call robots, androids or cyborgs, or genetic ones, in which human genomes are scrambled, infected or recoded, or psychological ones, in which human perception plays a significant role, SF has repeatedly sought to challenge the limits of both known science and accepted norms regarding human embodiment. In this writing workshop we shall revisit some older fictions that take on the task of re-imagining the human body, while we perform some fictional thought-experiments of our own. We will workshop those experiments, read and critique our own works, and strive to create fictions about our future(s).

Required Readings: First, a word about these texts: given that most students now use e-media, I’ve given up trying to get us all “on the same page” even if I still think this is the most effective way of reading in a classroom. That said, in most cases I’ve provided a link to a version of the text, if it is available online; and/or I will provide a PDF version (uploaded to Canvas).

Butler, Octavia E. “Speech-Sounds” (1983) PDF

Crowley, John. “Snow.” <http://www.lightspeedmagazine.com/fiction/snow/> and PDF

Le Guin, Ursula K. *Steering the Craft: A 21st-Century Guide to Sailing the Sea of Story*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2015 (available on Amazon).

_____. “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” (1973). PDF

Mills, Samantha. “Rabbit Test” (2022). PDF.

Recommended Readings: [Ancient Androids](#); Ursula K. Le Guin on [What is SF?](#)

Requirements: We shall be doing short writing exercises, a mid-term assignment and a final short story or novel chapter. Final grades will be assigned according to the following numerical breakdown: Attendance/class participation 40% (this includes all in-class work and any asynchronous work we do); mid-term: 30% and final paper: 30 %.

Grading Scale A = 94-100; A- = 90-93; B+ = 87-89; B = 84-86; B- = 80-83; C+ = 77-79; C = 74-76; C- = 70-73; D+ = 67-69; D = 64-66; D- = 60-63; E = 0-59.

You are welcome to track your final grade on Canvas but do keep in mind that not **every** in-class workshop participation exercise is entered onto Canvas. This means that the 40% you will receive for attendance/class participation will likely be a little higher than what Canvas will show you.

1. Class participation: a writing workshop should be actively engaged in writing, so therefore it is a small class, so it should belong to you--this means active, responsible engagement. You will agree to work in the class, with due respect to the class and your classmates. Class participation includes:

a. Attendance: you should try to attend our virtual sessions virtually, preferably with your camera on since we are such a small class, but that is **not mandatory**. The participation portion of your grade for this class will be calculated based on your attendance and your participation in class activities. Since the pedagogical approach of this course depends on student engagement and interaction, you are required, **at a minimum**, to participate in class activities through the audio function of Zoom and/or the chat function. I print out the chat after every class and I keep track of who is engaged there.

b. Preparation. You will agree to have PREPARED whatever the day's assignment is. Just showing up does not constitute good class participation, especially in a writing workshop.

2. Mid-Term: For your mid-term (8-10 pages), I want you to write a SF love story. When I say 'love story' I don't mean a sentimental Hallmark Channel story, and I don't mean erotica or pornography hard or soft core, and I don't mean silly. I mean a story, about the relationship between science and human bonds. In other words, I mean a real love story, about what love really means, and I will tell you flat out when I respond to it whether I consider the piece you turn in a 'real' love story or not.

3. In-class writing (and workshopping): We are going to do written 'thought-experiments' and critique them. Some of these will be done in class, some of these will be written at home and discussed in class, and **all of them** will count towards your class-participation.

4. Final Paper: For your final, you must turn in either a short story or a first chapter of a piece of SF you have either been working on during the semester, or a brand-new piece.

And now for the obligatory UF stuff

Academic Honesty Policy: UF students are bound by the Honor Pledge that states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: 'On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.'" The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor of this class.

Plagiarism: I regret having to remind you that plagiarism is a serious offense. All students are required to abide by the Academic Honesty Guidelines, which have been accepted by the University. The academic community of students and faculty at the University of Florida strives to develop, sustain and protect an environment of honesty, trust and respect. Students are expected to pursue knowledge with integrity. Exhibiting honesty in academic pursuits and reporting violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines will encourage others to act with integrity. Violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and a student being subject to the sanctions in paragraph XIV of the Student Conduct Code. The conduct set forth hereinafter constitutes a violation of the Academic Honesty Guidelines (University of Florida Rule 6C1_4.017). For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and collusion, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.php>

Civility: If you need to leave the Zoom room during class, please be sure to leave with discretion. You will be marked absent if you are gone more than 10 minutes; if you need to sleep, please stay offline and sleep; please do not be rude, either to me, or to your fellow students. It is the policy of The University of Florida to provide an educational and working environment for its students, faculty and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. In accordance with federal and state law, the University prohibits discrimination based on sex, including sexual harassment. Sex discrimination and sexual harassment will not be tolerated, and individuals who engage in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action. The University encourages students, faculty, staff, and visitors to promptly report sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about the University of Florida policies regarding harassment, see the University of Florida Student Conduct Code at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/conductcode.php>

The Disability Resource Center: The Dean of Student's Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. Staff at the Disability Resource Center will assist any student who registers as having a disability. Official documentation of a disability is required to determine eligibility for appropriate classroom accommodations. The professional employees at the Disability Resource Program serve as full-time advocates for students with disabilities ensuring students have physical and programmatic access to all college programs. For more information about Student Disability Services, see: <http://www.ufl.edu/disability/>

Course Delivery: UF Admin. has designated this course as a 100% online. The class will largely be synchronous, but we will have a few asynchronous sessions.

Online Course Evaluation: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/public-results/>

Final Grade Appeals: If you want to appeal the final grade you receive for this course, you should contact Professor Kenneth Kidd, Associate Chair and Undergraduate Coordinator of the English Department. You will submit your course materials for evaluation by a committee assembled by Professor Kidd. The committee may decide to raise, lower, or leave unchanged your final grade for the course. Its decision is final.

UF Grading Policies for Assigning Grade Points

<http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Schedule of Classes

The following schedule of readings is a working plan. If it becomes necessary to alter the schedule for whatever reason, I will try to give ample warning.

Week 1 *A Writer Must Also Read*

W. Jan 10 Introduction—go over syllabus, policies, overview of semester, grading system; introduce us to each other and we will talk about the poem “Werewomen” by Ursula K. Le Guin.

HMW: “The Mushroom Hunters” by Neil Gaiman and the *Introduction to Steering the Craft*.

Week 2

W. Jan 17 Gaiman, SF, narrative prose, and our workshopping.

HMW: Thought Experiment #1 (on Canvas) due by **midnight Friday Jan 19**. Read the short story “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas.”

Week 3

W. Jan. 24: Discussion of “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” (1973) and TE #1.

HWM: Read “Snow.” Thought Experiment #2 (on Canvas) due by **midnight Jan. 26**.

Week 4

W. Jan. 31 Discussion of John Crowley’s “Snow” (1985) and TE#2.

HMW: Read “Speech Sounds” by Octavia E. Butler. Thought Experiment #3 (on Canvas) due by **midnight Feb. 2**

Week 5

W. Feb. 7 Discussion of “Speech Sounds” by Butler and TE #3

HMW: Read “Rabbit Test” and Chapter One of *Steering the Craft* and do the two exercises (very short!). Due by Friday Feb. 9 by midnight.

Week 6: *A Writer Must Practice, Practice, Practice, like for the Olympics*

W. Feb 14: Happy V-Day. *Steering the Craft* Chapter one and exercises.

HMW: Read Chapter five of *Steering the Craft* and do the exercise, due Monday, Feb. 20 by midnight.

Week 7:

W. Feb 21 Chapter 5 and the exercise.

HMW: Read the appendix of *Steering the Craft*

Week 8. *Mid-term*

W. Feb. 28 **Day off.** During this week, try to choose a mss. you want critiqued. It must be five pages long only. It can be the beginning of a short-story, novel, a scene, a scenario, or even an earlier exercise you’d like to expand or hone. I recommend you use this as part of your final

paper, as well. We shall start workshopping shortly, we will be going in reverse alphabetical order.

HMW: Midterms are due by midnight tonight (Feb. 28) on Canvas. Read Chapter 6 of *Steering the Craft* and do the exercise (due by Sunday, Mar. 2 by midnight).

Week 9

W. Mar. 7 Point of View: A discussion (we will start workshopping next week)

HMW: Read Chapter 2 of *Steering the Craft*, but only do the exercise if you feel you need extra credit! I will be sending out work for critique.

Week 10

Spring Break (March 11-15)

Week 11 ...learning to give and take constructive criticism

W. Mar. 20 Workshopping

Week 12

W. Mar. 27 Workshopping

Week 13

W. Apr. 3 Workshopping

Week 14

W. Apr. 10 Workshopping

Week 15

W. April 17 Workshopping

Week 16

W. April 24 Last Day of Class

Werewomen
by Ursula K. Le Guin

I want to go moonwalking
on it or under it I don't care
I just want to go moonwalking
alone.

Women in their sixties
don't go to the moon,
women in the cities
don't go out alone.

But I want O listen what I want
is to be not afraid.
Listen what I need is freedom.

Women in their sixties
think about dying,
women in the cities
think about dying,
all kinds of women
think about lying,
think about lying alone.

But listen there's a moon out there
and I don't want sex and I don't want death
and I don't want what you think I want
only to be a free woman.

What is that, a free woman,
a young free woman,
an old free woman?
Asking for the moon.

Women in their sixties
have no moon.

Women in the cities
howl at the moon.

All kinds of women
talk about walking alone.

When the moon is full
listen how they howl.
listen how they howl together.

THE MUSHROOM HUNTERS

By Neil Gaiman

Science, as you know, my little one, is the study
of the nature and behaviour of the universe.
It's based on observation, on experiment, and measurement,
and the formulation of laws to describe the facts revealed.

In the old times, they say, the men came already fitted with brains
designed to follow flesh-beasts at a run,
to hurdle blindly into the unknown,
and then to find their way back home when lost
with a slain antelope to carry between them.
Or, on bad hunting days, nothing.

The women, who did not need to run down prey,
had brains that spotted landmarks and made paths between them
left at the thorn bush and across the scree
and look down in the bole of the half-fallen tree,
because sometimes there are mushrooms.

Before the flint club, or flint butcher's tools,
The first tool of all was a sling for the baby
to keep our hands free
and something to put the berries and the mushrooms in,
the roots and the good leaves, the seeds and the crawlers.
Then a flint pestle to smash, to crush, to grind or break.

And sometimes men chased the beasts
into the deep woods,
and never came back.

Some mushrooms will kill you,
while some will show you gods
and some will feed the hunger in our bellies. Identify.
Others will kill us if we eat them raw,
and kill us again if we cook them once,
but if we boil them up in spring water, and pour the water away,
and then boil them once more, and pour the water away,
only then can we eat them safely. Observe.

Observe childbirth, measure the swell of bellies and the shape of breasts,
and through experience discover how to bring babies safely into the world.

Observe everything.

And the mushroom hunters walk the ways they walk
and watch the world, and see what they observe.
And some of them would thrive and lick their lips,
While others clutched their stomachs and expired.
So laws are made and handed down on what is safe. Formulate.

The tools we make to build our lives:
our clothes, our food, our path home...
all these things we base on observation,
on experiment, on measurement, on truth.

And science, you remember, is the study
of the nature and behaviour of the universe,

based on observation, experiment, and measurement,
and the formulation of laws to describe these facts.

The race continues. An early scientist
drew beasts upon the walls of caves
to show her children, now all fat on mushrooms
and on berries, what would be safe to hunt.

The men go running on after beasts.

The scientists walk more slowly, over to the brow of the hill
and down to the water's edge and past the place where the red clay runs.
They are carrying their babies in the slings they made,
freeing their hands to pick the mushrooms.